

THE PAUL JACOBS COLUMN

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NEW ELLSBERG REVELATIONS

by Paul Jacobs

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*See Sherman Days
R.F. Kennedy
Section This would mean
next 3 parts
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Secret information never revealed before about the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962 has now been disclosed to me by Daniel Ellsberg, who made public the Pentagon Papers.

This new information proves, almost conclusively, that the threat of a nuclear war, which developed in late October, 1962, was based on the false belief of top United States officials that it was the Russians who had shot down a U-2 plane on October 27th. In fact, the plane, piloted by Major Rudolf Anderson of Greenville, S.C., who was killed, had almost certainly been brought down either by Cubans or by Soviet soldiers, forced to do so at gunpoint by the Cubans.

It also seems clear that the Cuban officials who only recently informed a group of liberal Republicans about the body of a U.S. pilot who was being kept, on 11-15-62,

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Page Two...PAUL JACOBS ... November 14/15... in Cuba,
were referring to the pilot of a low-flying reconnaissance plane
which was shot down by Cuban anti-aircraft fire on Nov. 5th
while checking on the dismantling of the Russian missiles,
which began on October 31.

In commenting on the Cuban statement that they had
the body of a U.S. pilot, the State Department said only that
Major Anderson was the only U-2 flier killed. But the
Department did not say he was the only flier killed during that
period.

And the fact that all three countries involved have
been willing until now to participate in suppressing both these
incidents indicates how little is still known about the
confrontation that came only a hairbreadth away from plunging
the world into a disastrous nuclear war.

Ellsberg, who I knew had made a classified study of
this situation in 1964 for the U.S. government, responded to
my queries by pointing out that the mistaken American belief
in who was responsible for the dangerous U-2 incident was due
to Premier Nikita Khrushchev's written assurance to President
John F. Kennedy that the Soviet surface-to-air missile sites

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in Cuba were controlled totally by the Russians, with no possibility that the Cubans could operate them.

Thus, when the U-2 was shot down, it was assumed in Washington that the Russians had made the decision to knock the plane out of the air. Then the U.S. issued an ultimatum, demanding not only the withdrawal of the Soviet missile sites but threatening immediate military reprisal if another U-2 plane was shot down.

But all the evidence now available, including Ellsberg's new disclosures, point to the Cubans as being responsible for bringing down Major Anderson's plane. Various sources have reported that Castro has even boasted about it. And in one case, a Cuban colonel was cited as the officer who brought down the U-2.

A few years later, however, according to Ellsberg, new evidence appeared proving that the SAM site, from which the Russian missile was fired at the high-altitude spy plane, had been occupied the night before by Cubans, using military force.

(MORE)

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Ellsberg discovered this new evidence, he states, while he was conducting an-inter-agency study of decision-making in crisis situations, with especial reference to the Cuban missile crisis. He did the classified study on behalf of the State Department Policy Planning Group, headed by Walt Rostow.

During the course of his investigation, Ellsberg was given access to classified material from the State Department, the Department of Defense and the CIA. The new material he found, which had not been available to any top U.S. official in 1962, forced Ellsberg to conclude that the Cubans, not the Russians, were responsible for shooting down the U-2.

Ellsberg has declined to specify the details of the new information, but other evidence exists that bears out his conclusion, and even makes it seem probable that the Cubans may have done the actual firing of the missile after they took over the SAM site from the Russians.

Fidel Castro, for example, stated in a 1975 interview with Frank Mankiewicz that "The order to shoot at

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Page Five...PAUL JACOBS...November 14/15...shoot at aircraft was given by us'' and that ''the order to the anti-aircraft to open fire was given by the Cuban side.''

Castro also told Mankiewicz that the low-flying U.S. aircraft were fired upon by ''our artillery.''

It's also known, from other sources, that relations between the Cubans and the Russians were tense in October, 1962, although the official American doctrine presents a picture of a docile Cuban leadership merely obeying Russian orders. That view fits the general U.S. attitude of all Soviet ''client states'' being vassals of the Soviet Union.

The Soviets, too, for their interests, have never admitted to the Americans that their control over the Cubans has always had definite limits, despite all the aid they have given the Castro regime.

As for the Cubans, they have maintained a discreet silence about the whole matter except for an occasional slip-up, as happened with the reference to the body of the American pilot, and at another time, when a Cuban press officer stated that Castro had his finger on the trigger when the U-2 was shot down.

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Page Six...PAUL JACOBS...November 14/15...down.

But Castro did admit that, in general, he and his colleagues in the government ''were annoyed by matters of form, by certain formalities'' during the negotiations between the Soviet leadership and the Americans. He also told Mankiewicz that in 1962 the Cubans ''felt very passionate and were opposed to any concessions in negotiations.'' Those ''passionate'' feelings and the fury the Cubans felt towards the U.S. following the Bay of Pigs invasion broke out in the Nov. 5th shooting down of the low flying plane, which has never been admitted by the U.S.

Now, however, according to Castro, the Cubans realize that the Soviet position was the correct one.

Castro also concedes now that ''If the Soviets made concessions, then one must reach the conclusion that we must be grateful to the Soviets for having taken measures which prevented a war.''

But to Ellsberg and all those others concerned with the risk of nuclear warfare, the lesson of the Cuban missile crisis is that the two superpowers almost brought about a nuclear disaster because the Russians didn't understand, until

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it was almost too late, that the dangers of putting Soviet missiles into Cuba were far greater than they had assumed and far greater than the assurances Khrushchev gave Kennedy.

At the same time, the Americans didn't understand that their ultimatums, which might have brought about a total escalation of the war, were based on a completely false understanding of the actual situation.

The world sighed with relief when the Cuban missile crisis de-escalated. Since then, the three countries have collaborated, tacitly, in not revealing how close to war they brought the world. Now, with Ellsberg's revelations, the relief everyone felt in 1962 will be even greater, for now it's clear the nuclear holocaust was almost on us because of completely wrong assumptions.

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